

WELLINGTON COLLEGE PARENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

1. Wellington College prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with this Procedure.
2. Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel and if any complaint is received outside of term-time, it may not be practical for the College to adhere to the timescales stated below. Reference to 'school days' means week days when the College is in term time.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Housemaster / Housemistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
2. If the Housemaster/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a head of department or a member of the College's Senior Management Team.
3. Complaints made directly to the Master, Second Master or head of department will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster/Housemistress unless the Master, Second Master or head of department deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Housemaster / Housemistress will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days or in the event that the Housemaster /Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Master. The Master will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
2. In most cases, the Second Master will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 5 school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Second Master to carry out further investigations. The Second Master will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
4. Once the Second Master, in liason with the Master, is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, and within 15 working days from the receipt of the complaint, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Second Master will also give reasons for his decision.
5. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they must do so within 1 month of the decision under Stage 2. They will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors at the College who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.
2. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the College. Each of the Panel Members shall be appointed by the Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable.
3. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 days prior to the hearing.
4. The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
5. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 15 school days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Master, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Master and Governors at the College.
6. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State, or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act, requests access to them.

Appendix

1. Complaints Procedure - Independent Member of the Panel

The following guidance comes from a letter sent by the DfES (as was) to the ISC General Secretary in 2002. Although dated, the advice is extant:

Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background perhaps retired members of the Police Force might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

You asked if it would be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

2. Contacting the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

The College is inspected by ISI. Parents and pupils have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint concerning a pupil's welfare. ISI will usually expect parents or pupils to have followed the College's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to ISI on 020 7600 0100 or you can write to the ISI Regional Office:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
Ground Floor
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA

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